

Marilyn Cotton

March 24, 2010

Good morning. I am a birth mother. You have been listening to adoptees. They have been telling you they have a right to their original birth certificate. They have been telling you it is a civil right, as a citizen of the United States of America, that they have a right to their birth information. They have been telling you they have a right to know who they are, where they come from, their family health information and the circumstances of their birth. This is information that other Americans have. This is the information that they want. I am a birth mother. And I am telling you that they are right.

In 1966 I had and gave up my daughter. I was not married. It was all very hush hush. Back then, you either got married or you went away. Marriage was not a choice for me. I spent 6 months in a

“home for unwed mothers”. I was there under an assumed name. Why? To protect my parents' good name, and to hopefully salvage mine. I spent hours talking to a case worker. I told her all about me. I told her all about my baby's father. In all the time I sat there, spilling my life to her, not once, did she even hint that I would be protected from my child. I am 64 years old and I don't need to be protected from my adult child. In fact, I need to know that she is okay. I need to know she is happy. **I need to know I did the right thing, all those years ago.** The only promise that was made to me was, someday, when you grow up, you will get married, you will have other babies and forget all about this. Well ladies and gentleman, I did grow up. I did get married and I did have other babies, 2 of them. But never, not for one moment, did I forget my first born child. Mothers don't forget 9 months of pregnancy. Mothers don't forget they gave birth. Mothers don't forget their children. Even though I only saw her for a minute, through the glass, I never forgot.

My daughter is almost 44 years old. Her birthday is next month. I will send her a birthday card. I will call her to wish her happy birthday. I went looking for her. Through the wonder of the internet and people I have never met at Michigan Searching, I got lucky, very lucky. I found her.

On May 10, 2007 the call was made. The first thing she said was, "I have been waiting for this call my whole life". I had been waiting for those words for 41 years. I **had** done the right thing. She has had a wonderful life. Now, she just has more people to love and more people who love her. And, I have 3 more grandchildren.

We have spent hours talking. She understands the whys. Her life no longer begins on page 2. She looks at me and sees her green eyes. She sees my 4' 11" and smiles at her 5' 2". If you have never had to wonder who you are, you have an idea how it feels to find out. And now, the puzzle has all the pieces.

There is one more twist to all of this. I **am** a birth mother. I am also adopted. I see this from both sides. I found my birth family in 2006. My mother had passed away before I had the chance to thank her for giving me life and for the life she gave me. It was those strangers at Michigan Searching that got me on the right path. I was able to do this only because my sister was looking for me.

I had wonderful adoptive parents, and have a great extended family. But, there was something missing. I have that now. Twice over. Both with my brothers and sister that I found and with my daughter and my grandchildren.

My family, my adopted brother, my husband and my other 2 children are all happy and complete. My children, all 3 of them are loving having each other. We are a family. It has grown the last few years, and that is a good thing.

Pass bills # 4006 and 4015. The adopted need the same rights as the rest of the country. Birth mothers are **not** afraid. Were

there promises of confidentiality, protection from our adult children? Absolutely not. The only promise was, that we would forget and that, ladies and gentleman, did not happen.

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